

WIVES OF THE BIBLE

A Cross-Section of Femininity

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

AS IS THE MOTHER, SO IS HER DAUGHTER

Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb . . . saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter (Ezekiel 16:44).

THROUGHOUT the length and breadth of the land, today is being observed as Mother's Day. Personally I have no penchant for assigned subjects. I vastly prefer to follow what seems to be the leading of the Spirit from week to week, rather than to accept the multitude of suggestions that come to us from all conceivable quarters and innumerable organizations. But, surely the subject of Mother is one to which the pulpit should revert often, and upon which every true preacher of the Gospel should speak with enthusiasm.

Years ago I listened to a Chatauqua lecturer as he recited a number of oriental proverbs. Among them was this one: "Look at the mother, and choose the daughter"—advice to marriageable young men. The principle involved in that oriental proverb was doubtless born of this more ancient oriental and inspired proverb, *As is the mother, so is her daughter*.

If you look into your King James Version you will get a little bit nearer the oriental method of speech, for when you strike out the italics you have left exactly what the oriental said—**As the mother—her daughter**.

There is scarcely a family in the country that contains a daughter that does not illustrate the proverb. To be sure, there are exceptions to all rules, but they are rare enough to prove the rule. This makes maternity, then, a somewhat serious thing, and brings every mother to a solemn sense of responsibility.

Let me discuss this text by calling your attention to The Law of Inheritance, The Law of Fellowship and The Law of Finalities.

THE LAW OF INHERITANCE

As is the mother, so is her daughter.

This is often physically true, ethically true, and spiritually true.

The stream of life-blood is the same.

It is the mother's blood that sustains the fetal life. From her veins and arteries is brought the life-stream itself. Moses was scientifically correct when he said, "**The life is in the blood.**" How natural, then, that the daughter, who is indeed a part of the mother, should be like her.

To a considerable extent it is that conscious life-tie which binds the two together by indissoluble bonds, and makes their mutual fellowship so sweet, and their enforced separation so painful.

There is a pretty story told of a little girl who followed some workmen from her father's grounds as they went home to their dinners in a cabin some distance away. She was extremely fond of one old man in the crowd, and he of her. When, therefore, he looked out from his door and saw her sitting some distance away, calmly waiting for his return, he called to her and asked if she would not come into the cottage. She walked timidly up near it and, peeking through the open door, questioned, "Is there any mother there?"

"Yes, my dear," he answered. "There is a mother in here."

"Oh, all right," she answered. "Then I am not afraid if there is a mother there."

One of the saddest observations of life is a home without a mother; without the one who brought the babes to being, whose they are in the most essential sense, and who, herself, not only lives for them, but lives in them!

That is why the kinship in appearance is often strong.

If there is a considerable family, by the very law of Mendel, some of them will look like the mother, and most frequently it is the daughter who does.

When Mrs. Riley graduated from the University she had a classmate who later became a professor in Columbia. She got very much interested in Mendel's law of inheritance. Knowing that I was a brunette and Mrs. Riley a blonde, and doubtless doubting in her own mind which was the dominant, she frequently wrote my wife, asking her to give her a written description of each of the six children, because she wanted to apply Mendel's law and see how it worked out in this family.

Those of you who are familiar with the children know that Howard and William duplicate their father's color and feature, and Hewitt approaches the same in all save size; that Herbert and Branson are crosses—neither dark nor fair—the first tall as his father, and the second, his mother's height; but Eunice, in spite of her attempt to attain her father's height, was blessed with her mother's color and personal characteristics, and has far more in common with that mother, in both, than any boy born into the family.

There is a story told of a young woman who had spent some time in the company of an old lady, and when at last the latter departed, the young woman turned to a friend and said,

“If I could be such an old lady as that—so beautiful, serene, sweet, and lovable, I shouldn’t mind growing old.”

“Well,” answered the friend, “if you want to be that kind of an old lady, you’d better begin making her right now. She doesn’t strike me as a piece of work that was done in a hurry. It has taken a long time to make her what she is. If you are going to paint that sort of portrait of yourself to leave the world, you’d better be mixing your colors now.”

But, the girl who was born to that sort of a mother had some of the colors mixed for her with which to begin, and in fact, in order to be different she has almost deliberately to concoct others and take a course different from what her own nature prescribes and society justly expects.

I have known daughters who were the exact opposites of their mothers; who contrasted Mother’s sweetness with vinegar of spirit; Mother’s seriousness with a violent frivolity; Mother’s spirituality with a wild worldliness. But again, these are exceptions. They are not the rule. The rule is, **As is the mother, so is her daughter**, and in hundreds of cases the physical resemblance is striking, the ethical likeness is evident, and the daughter is to a large degree the spiritual counterpart of her mother.

Their inherent, traits are commonly similar.

We have philosophers at this time who insist that breeding and environment determine character. Beyond question they profoundly influence it. Good blood is more to be desired than gold. To be born of a godly mother is worth more to a child than to be an heir of riches, for birth gives an actual bent to life itself.

Nero’s likeness to his mother made him the satanic tyrant that he was; Byron’s likeness to his mother accounted for his ill-temper and ugly attitude. But the mother of the Wesleys so put her stamp upon those sons as to make them saviors of society. The mother of Spurgeon accounted, in no small measure, for his greatness; as did the mother of Moody.

It is no mere accident of speech that God’s influence is likened to that of a mother, for the Lord God Himself said, **As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort, you.**

The boy or girl, therefore, who begins life with a good mother has enjoyed from God a marvelous favor, and by that single circumstance is given every advantage in the race of life. This text involves another thing, namely—

THE LAW OF FELLOWSHIP

The association of mother and daughter gives to the latter the opportunity of imitation.

Little girls do what they see their mother doing, speak as they hear the mother speak, and act as they witness the mother’s action.

Sam Jones was lecturing at Indianapolis on one occasion and in his homely way, he said: “The finest girl in Indiana is the girl that makes her mother her sweetheart, and loves her mother better than she does all the world. Girls, the best friend you have on earth is your mother. Girls, get a move on you and be somebody. So many girls just want to be pretty little things.

They let their mother scrub and wash, while they stay upstairs and take care of their complexion. I would rather have the complexion of an Indian and wait on my sweet mother, than have her drudge for me and leave me with the complexion of a lily.”

A San Francisco girl wrote this a few years back: “There is a lady I know who behaves the Bible. She is like the chapter in the Bible about love, for she **‘suffers long and is kind, she envies not, she is not puffed up.’** She could have been a great musician, but like the robin in *‘The Vision of Sir Launfal,’* ‘he sings to the whole world and she to her nest,’ so this lady is limited in her audience to two little girls. They are very fond of her, for she is very kind to them. She is never cross. Perhaps you have guessed that this lady is related to me, for she is my mother, so that is why I have opportunities to know that she really does behave the Bible all the time, and she reads it to us at night.”

The office of Mother gives influence its opportunity.

It is said that when Archimedes discovered the principle of the lever he exclaimed, “Now, if somebody will provide me with a fulcrum I will lift the world off its hinges”; but the mother has not only the lever, she has the fulcrum in the fact of her affection, and she is able to do a greater thing than lift the world off its hinges—lift sons and daughters into the light of divine love!

There have been few great men in the world, and still fewer great women, who do not pay tribute to Mother’s influence and readily concede that she has done more to shape their lives than any other person or circumstance of life itself.

We are told that Cowper received a picture of his mother fifty years after she was dead, and this is what he wrote:

Oh, that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine; thy own sweet smile I see
The same that oft in childhood solaced me.

My Mother! When I learned that thou wast dead,
Say wast, thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o’er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life’s journey just begun?

Our conception of life, our conception of the after-world, our conception of God Himself—they are all influenced by Mother. Ryan, my favorite poet-priest, in his reverie, says:

But God is sweet.
My mother told me so,
When I knelt at, her feet
Long—so long—ago;
She clasped my hands in hers.
Ah! me, that memory stirs
My soul's profoundest deep—
No wonder that I weep.
She clasped my hands and smiled,
Ah! then I was a child—
I knew not, harm—
My mother's arm
Was flung around me; and I felt
That when I knelt
To listen to my mother's prayer,
God was with my mother there.
Yea! "God is sweet!"
She told me so;
She never told me wrong;
And through my years of woe
Her whispers soft, and sad, and low,
And sweet as angel's song,
Have floated like a dream.
And, ah! tonight I seem
A very child in my old, old place,
Beneath my mother's blessed face;
And through each sweet remembered word,
This sweetest undertone is heard:
"My child! my child! our God is sweet,
In life—in death—kneel at His feet—
Sweet in gladness, sweet in gloom,
Sweeter still beside the tomb."

This influence fruits in increasing likeness.

We know what a marvelous man John G. Paton was; how rich his life; how influential his missionary ministry; how he led kingdoms into the light; how his faith shone resplendent in the midst of difficulties, and again and again was equal to the removing of mountains! Doubtless these facts were accounted for by an early experience he himself recites.

The family were poor to the last degree. By drought the crops had failed. The father had gone off to work at Hawick, and could not return for two days, when it was hoped he might bring supplies purchased with the money paid for his labor. In the meantime the meal barrel was empty, and Paton's mother, too proud and sensitive to let the neighbors know, coaxed the children off to bed, assuring them that by morning God would send them a good, big meal.

That very night a carrier from Lockerbie came with the mail, and with it a present from her father who, knowing nothing of the circumstances of the family, had been moved to send at that particular time a love offering to his daughter, a bag of new potatoes, another of ground meal, a home-made cheese, etc., and breakfast was bountiful. “When we children looked at it in surprise, our mother said, ‘O my children, love your heavenly Father; tell Him in faith and prayer all your needs, and He will supply your wants so far as it shall be for your good and His glory.’”

Little wonder that Paton believed God! What was his faith but a reflection of that which he had found in his mother?

But this text involves another point, namely,

THE LAW OF FINALITIES

Time emphasizes temper and tendency.

There are a good many people who expect to reform later in life. No! Later life is not so likely to reform you as to fix you. Our natural and even our acquired characteristics tend to stability with the passing of time. Time has upon men and women much the effect that it has upon mixed mortar—it dries and hardens it. What you are today you will be even more tomorrow. The characteristics that triumph in your youth will be absolute conquerors of your age.

If you are in part like Mother now, you will be more like her as the months move on and the years run by. If you look like her now, you will grow more into her likeness when your hair whitens and the wrinkles creep into your face. If you entertain some of her virtues now, you are liable to acquire more of them as you pass through the experiences that made her what she was.

We remember that Henry Drummond a few years ago said, “The longer people dwell together the more like each other they become.” Seventy-eight husbands and wives who had spent half a century in marital relations were, by actual photographs, shown to be far more alike in features than were seventy-eight brothers and sisters who had seen an equal length of time. Time, then, is telling on personal traits and time is determining the truth or the falsehood of this proverb. You are either more like your mother this morning than you ever were before, or you are less like her, and

Time will accentuate personal traits.

That is doubtless the meaning of the Scripture— **He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is holy, let him be holy still.**

We grow either in grace or in ungraciousness; in sweetness or ill-temper; in spirituality or worldly lusts. There are women in the world who have drifted so far from Mother’s ideals, who have so long ceased from Mother’s instruction, who have so often violated Mother’s precepts, that her very name to them is a wound: and there are others who, when the neighbors meet them and see in them the clear reflection of a mother’s influence, and witness in them the course and conduct that duplicate Mother’s life, are compelled to say, “How like her mother she is!”

This effect of time will determine the eternal estate.

I speak now not so much to the latter of this company, for they are on their way to heaven, but I want to extend them congratulations this morning and share with their mothers the joy of seeing them in the path of the just; but I address my last word to those who have forgotten Mother's love, who have despised her instruction, and who have walked in forbidden paths.

Forty years ago I came out of my home one morning and picked up the Chicago "*Inter-Ocean*," a paper to which I subscribed, and I read there this story, the story that I published in another volume some years ago.

It recited how in a hospital on the south side two women came visiting one day. One of them had a youthful face, but her hair was prematurely white. Upon that sweet face there were marks of sorrow, through which she had evidently passed. The women bore in their arms great bunches of beautiful flowers, and said, "Might we leave a few flowers with your patient?" The nurse, to whom they addressed themselves, turned from them to look toward the restless figure on the hospital cot, and as she shook her head she said, "I fear my patient is too far gone. Better take them along and give them to some of the others who are conscious and can enjoy them." But this woman, looking at the head sunken in the pillow, and seeing it was a girl, said, "Oh, let me leave her just a few of these honeysuckles." Then taking some from the greater cluster she went over and laid them almost in a wreath upon the bed above her head.

The dying girl opened her eyes. Evidently her quickened nostrils caught the scent of them, and at once she commenced slowly to speak, "Oh, Mother; they are beautiful! I planted them with my own hand! I had hoped to pluck them; but I am too sick now!"

The woman fixed her gaze upon the shrunken features, and then with a convulsive thrust of her arm under the pillow she lifted the patient's head to her own face, and while she showered it with kisses, she cried, "Oh, Margaret, my dear! Have I found you at last?"

Six months before, Margaret had quit the southern home in Illinois and come to Chicago in search of work. The World's Fair was on; temptations were rife; unemployed and discouraged people were a multitude. She found no work, but she fell into a trap—for many were set those days for unwary feet—and she went down. Disgraced and shamed, she refused to let her mother know, and now for many months that mother in Chicago had visited red light sections, gone into hospitals and poor-houses, ever ministering to the girls found in them all, and ever entertaining the feeble hope that sometime, somewhere, she might discover her own. At last, in this hospital her hope had been rewarded!

The consciousness that "Mother has come! She loves me still, and though I be stained, she showers my face with the kisses of her affection," wrought better than physicians, medicine, and nurse. "And now," said the reporter, "Margaret is greatly improved and will go back with her mother to southern Illinois to try life over again. And let us hope she wins and becomes the wonderful girl that her mother dreamed she would be, when as a babe she kissed her affection into her face."

The nearest thing to love divine is a mother's love! But the marvel of the Gospel is in this, that when "**mother and father forsake thee, the Lord will take thee up.**" His love outlasts all!

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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